



Town of Montague
Department, Board, Committee, Commission
BUDGET NARRATIVE

FY 24

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: **Selectboard (122)** Submitted by: Steve Ellis

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY24 budget request.

The FY24 Selectboard budget presents an apparent 5.2% increase, because the FY23 salaries line was not adjusted to include negotiated cost of living adjustments at the Fall 2022 STM. The decision not to make the adjustments reflected the fact that the three-month vacancies in two new staff positions provided sufficient flexibility to cover increased FY23 wage costs without additional appropriation. If the budget is adjusted to account for those changes, the total increase from FY23 to FY24 presents as 2.4%, inclusive of personal and office expenses.

Salaries for full time personal will have a new real increase of 3.4% in FY24 while part time staff salary will increase 5.0%. The difference reflects the fact that two of the three full-time staff are already at the top of their salary scale and therefore steps are not available. Having purchased required office equipment and onboarded staff in October/November, the department is otherwise not seeking major new investments and total non-personnel costs will decrease by 6.9% from FY23 to FY24.

From a proportional standpoint, the most notable increase is in the cost of subscription services from \$200 to \$600. This reflects the cost of a subscription to the Statehouse News Service, which was previously available to Towns at no cost. Access to this news source costs \$375/year. It was re-established in 2022 and has been found to be very beneficial to issue and program tracking. Advertising and professional services budgets are also proposed to increase modestly to reflect additional expenses related to project procurement and bidding. Certain cost lines also decreased, most notably including office equipment, which dropped from \$3,000 to \$500, reflecting lower requirements now that new offices are established. Longevity was accidentally over-estimated in the FY23 budget and is reduced in FY24 along with travel, with the need to drive to in-person seminars and events reduced due to the emergence of online events.

2. To this point in FY23, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Please describe.

In accordance with plans, the Selectboard hired a full time Assistant Town Administrator and a 20/hr. per week Office Assistant in fall of 2022. Office spaces were established for these personnel and arrangements made for the Montague Retirement Board to move to another space in Town Hall. The ATA continued to serve double-duty as Planner at the time of this submission, but we do anticipate a replacement will be on board at the start of 2023. Despite this, we have deployed that capacity to support and/or lead a variety of capital related projects, while also expanding the Town Administrator and Executive Assistant's engagement with a variety of human resource and technology matters.

HR functions, including attendance and onboarding have moved (or are in the process of moving) to the Selectboard Office, as intended and the work of the office in the areas of capital planning, human resources, procurement, and technology are expected to accelerate in the coming months as key department head positions are filled and the focus intensifies on building strategic plans to guide next steps in each of those areas. In addition, we have

intensified engagement with non-municipal districts in an effort to enhance communication and better support/coordinate the work of the Town and these vital entities.

3. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY23 operating budget? If so, offer any your recommendations you may have for improving the situation in FY24.

With substantial investments in staff capacity and knowledge, the Selectboard Office is now well-positioned to proactively address operational weaknesses and build systems to support the work of the Town, enhance planning and compliance, and pursue resources that better fulfill the community's vision and needs. We require no additional resources at this time beyond basic budget maintenance in an inflationary environment.

4. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY22 or FY23? Please list them and share the current status of those expenditures/projects.

The Selectboard Office successfully bid and oversaw construction of the new Town Hall roof project in fall 2022. We were able to supplement that appropriation with an additional \$50,000 earmark from the State. This was vital as bids came in over-budget by some \$13,000. Appropriation for the Shea Theater lower roof replacement remains in hand as it was decided it would be more cost effective to bid that alongside replacement of the (very similar) Colle Building roof. Design of the two roofs has been contracted for and the project is expected to be bid in March 2023, pending appropriation of funds for the Colle component of the project.

